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ABSTRACT

Career education is moving away from addressing careers as a single choice in time, or as one unit or course in a curriculum. This digest discusses the infusion of skills (research, thinking, questioning) into the regular school curriculum and describes one such infusion program. Research indicates that instilling these skills into education (rather than teaching them separately) benefits the students best as long as such instruction is accompanied by professional development or staff training. Teachers have a strong influence on students' career development and infusion courses help them make a conscious impact on students. Teachers learn a basic framework for career planning and are shown how to connect activities in the classroom to the events unfolding in the labor market. In addition to infusing career development ideas in career content, teachers are encouraged to implement the ideas outside of class as well. The ultimate goal is for students to experience a smooth transition from school-to-school or school-to-work. But in order for teachers and counselors to infuse career development into the curriculum, professional development needs to be provided; infusing career education into all subject areas by providing professional development to educators, can make this approach a reality. (RJM)

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Helping Schools With Career Infusion

Garnet Millar

Overview

Infusion is an interesting concept. According to Webster, infusion refers to the act or process of steeping or soaking in water or a substance in order to extract its virtues. The Gage Canadian Dictionary uses the words "permeate," "fill with," and "inspire" to define infusion. Lately, the word infusion has been adapted by career educators to refer to the introduction of career concepts and strategies into the regular curriculum in order to instill relevance and quality to subject matter at school.

The Infusion Approach

The infusion of career development and planning skills into the regular school curriculum is advocated by career leaders. Hiebert (1993), in a theme editorial in *Guidance and Counselling*, calls for an infusion or integration of career concepts across all grade levels and in all subjects. He contends that in addition to providing information about the specific subject matter, teachers may properly discuss the roles of various jobs. Whether the subject is science, health, or mathematics, students must learn that it is natural and important to ask questions about the nature of jobs in which people engage. School counselors can facilitate infusion of career skills by consulting with teachers and by teaching units for/with them. This approach of infusing career information into subject matter will add relevance and interest for young people and, ultimately, will contribute to the establishment of a "Career Development Culture."

Over the years, the author has been involved in a number of studies dealing with the infusion of sets of skills (research, thinking, questioning) into the regular school curriculum, as opposed to teaching these skills separately. These studies (Millar, 1994; Himsl & Millar, 1988) have indicated that the infusion approach to education is best, as long as it is accompanied by professional development or staff training either at the preservice level (university) and/or inservice level (schools). In Alberta, to accomplish this staff training goal, a course entitled "Everyday Career Development" was created to help teachers infuse career skills into their daily teaching activities.

"Everyday Career Development" is a three-day professional development course for secondary school teachers. "Homework" is assigned to enable educators to implement and receive feedback on various strategies. The strategies included in the course largely require an awareness of career development, rather than an entirely new set of duties for teachers. After a field-test of the course, teachers overwhelmingly reported satisfaction and confidence in their ability to implement the ideas in their math, science or English classes. A *Facilitator Guide to Everyday Career Development* (Redekopp, 1994) has been prepared to help local facilitators maintain quality control when delivering the course.

A Method of Infusing Career Skills

Whether they realize it or not, teachers have a strong influence on students' career development. The course "Everyday Career Development," enables them to make a conscious impact on students by using the infusion approach. Teachers learn how to connect activities in the classroom to the events unfolding in the labor market. The ultimate goal of the course is for students to have a smooth transition from school-to-school or school-to-work, assisted by a network of teachers who are infusing career development concepts and strategies into their everyday teaching activities.

The course reference book, *Everyday Career Development - Concepts and Practices* (Participant Guide), (Redekopp, Fiske, Lemon, & Garber - Conrad, 1994) contains six chapters: Chapter 1, provides a perspective of global trends; Chapter 2, provides a view of career development; Chapter 3, provides an overview of career development in the school context; Chapter 4, provides a description of the labor market or work dynamic analysis; Chapter 5, provides specific strategies for helping students build their career; and Chapter 6, provides the learning options for students from three perspectives - high school courses, informal learning events, and learning experiences after high school

In this guide, teachers learn a basic framework for career planning. Briefly, this model examines a process which includes self analysis/re-analysis, learning, and experiences within the contexts of the world and the students' world. The components of this model are described more fully by Redekopp, Day, and Robb (1995).

The course typically is delivered in two, one and one-half day workshops with "homework" in between.

The following "homework" activities are included for the teachers: (a) review the curriculum they teach and describe how it helps students meet the workforce requirements of the new economy; (b) identify their values, beliefs and interests and identify how these are fulfilled in their work and non-work lives; (c) have a class generate a list of activities and skill sets for a job sector related to a subject area.

Teachers can use a variety of methods or strategies to help students gain a better understanding of themselves in relation to the career building process. Some of these are as follows:

- Encourage students to examine and describe their school performance.
- Help students identify competencies used in school performance.
- Encourage students to talk with and observe individuals in a variety of roles.
- Help students connect their enduring visions with "the world."

In addition to infusing career development ideas in career content, teachers are encouraged to implement the ideas incidentally, i.e., make casual comments when they see students in the hall or in class. Parents can also assist by acting as volunteers. For example, in one school a parent, acting as a career technician, used a telephone hotline and interactive video disc to assist students in exploring various career paths.

The Need for Professional Development

In order for teachers and counselors to infuse career development into the curriculum, professional development needs to be provided. Ministries of Education have a responsibility to make professional development happen. The province of Alberta chose to use a partnership model rather than do it alone. Alberta developed a partnership with the provincial teachers' union and a private foundation (the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Foundation) to deliver the inservice. One of the guiding principles of this professional development initiative is that inservice opportunities should be available to teachers and counselors in their home locales. Local facilitators who are trained, provide this inservice around their home jurisdictions. A detailed facilitator guide is prepared for each course to promote consistency across different offerings of the same course. Each teacher and counselor who completes a specific number of courses will receive a certificate designating them as a "career education specialist."

In addition to "Everyday Career Development," other professional development courses offered to teachers explore methods in group career education and career education for special populations. These courses, in combination with "Everyday Career Development," will help ensure that teachers and counselors have the background and skills needed to implement successful infusion approach.

Conclusion

Clearly, career education is moving away from addressing careers as a single choice in time, or one unit or course in a curriculum, to a pervasive, life-span focus. Infusing career education into all subject areas by providing professional development to educators, can make this approach a reality. As a result, students will learn to view careers as dynamic and to view change as an indispensable element in their future work. The youth of today will require the career development concepts and strategies embodied in this infusion approach to live productively, successfully, and happily in the world of tomorrow.

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